

# FISH AND FEMINISTS

Elizabeth Harrison

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Over the last 15 years or so, feminist analyses have apparently influenced both thinking and practice in international development agencies. The language of gender and development has been widely adopted. For example, awareness of the differences between practical and strategic gender needs<sup>1</sup> is evident in the policy documentation of many multi-lateral and bilateral donors. However, the tendency of projects for women to 'misbehave' noted by Buvinic in 1986<sup>2</sup> is now replicated by the tendency of 'gender planning' to slip subtly and imperceptibly into the much older 'projects for women'. A relational approach to gender is replaced by a focus on women, while male gender identities lie unexamined in the background. The problem of institutionalizing gender analysis, making it more than a nagging concern on the margins, is as acute as ever: 'despite the energy and resources allocated to this work for more than a decade, Women in Development (WID) still most frequently remains an 'add-on' to mainstream policy and practice' (Moser 1993: 4). The commitment to gender analysis only rarely becomes gender-sensitive practice. More frequently it is translated into 'targeting women' and gradually exchanged for the practical exigencies of project reality.

This article traces the process, through a case study of one donor – the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) – and one of its projects in sub-Saharan Africa. The project is not specifically for women, nor does it focus mainly on gender issues. It aims to promote small-scale fish farming as a diversification and supplement to rural livelihoods. However, gender issues gained a high profile in the stated aims of the project. I examine how these are articulated and mean different things to different people in the policy process, from headquarters in Rome, to local level bureaucracies and the farmers in contact with the project.

The example shows how divergent interests contrive to reinforce the continued marginalization of

gender issues. I am not suggesting that there is anything especially heinous or different about the FAO or its associated project. Indeed, the efforts that have been made to incorporate gender are often extremely well-intentioned. However, processes observed in this case arguably reflect tendencies which are taking place in many similar organizations. Kardam (1991) argues in a study of the World Bank, the UNDP, and the Ford Foundation that the integration of gender issues is constrained by both structural and individual choice factors. The different organizations show different capacities and respond in different ways. Without advocates willing to bargain on their behalf, issues such as gender analysis are not automatically incorporated.

## 2 EXPLANATIONS

Two related influences are important in the apparent marginalization of gender issues. First, it can be explained by the different perspectives of different stakeholders in the process. Policy regarding gender is interpreted in diverse ways by different people. This is influenced not only by their position within an organization, but by a wide range of other characteristics. Age, gender, ethnicity, personal history, all influence how people act on and interpret the policies they are required to implement (Long and van der Ploeg 1989).

Gender is often portrayed as a technical concept which, if only better understood, could be integrated into the planning process. However, an understanding of gender issues from a feminist perspective introduces questions of power, control of resources, and conflict which are potentially challenging and certainly difficult to deal with. Staudt (1985) comments on male resistance to analyses of gender which threaten male privilege. There is, however, more than a crude dichotomy of interests at issue. For both men and women at all levels in any organizational structure there is also a need for simplification which conspires against any full comprehension of the construction and operation

<sup>1</sup> The concepts of practical and strategic needs are developed in the work of Maxine Molyneux (1985) and Caroline Moser (1986, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> By 'misbehave', Buvinic meant that projects' economic objectives evolved into welfare action during implementation.

of gender relations. On the one hand, there is a body of knowledge and argument pointing out the variety, complexity and flexibility gender analysis should encompass. By their very nature, because gender relations are socially constructed, they are subject to change and influenced by other aspects of differentiation. On the other hand, development practitioners are unable and unwilling to deal with such complexities. They need a kind of conceptual shorthand – ‘simple principles’ and ‘methodological tools’. In the course of such simplification, recognition of the potentially contentious and inherently political aspects of gender relations (as opposed to the technical) is usually the first to go.

The second and related influence in the process is a proliferation of information which is not used and is of highly varying quality. According to many donors, the biggest barrier to addressing gender issues is a shortage of information, not what is done with it. One of the significant achievements of feminist scholars in the 1970s and 1980s was to illuminate the blindness of most development interventions to the different needs and interests of men and women. However, questions need to be asked about the context and the use of such information. There is clearly a difference between ‘feminist knowledge’ which is challenging and ‘data for development’ (Goetz 1994) which is not. Merely collecting more information will not address the inequities it may reveal. This seriously misconstrues how projects work and assumes a commonality of interests of different actors which is unlikely to exist. As Bierschenk (1988) notes, it is more accurate to see development projects as arenas of negotiation for strategic groups.

### **3 GENDER AND THE CRISIS OF RURAL FISH FARMING**

Fish farming has been promoted in Africa since at least the 1940s. Most frequently, farmers are encouraged to construct earthen ponds, and to manage them as part of their farming system in combination with other crops. From the point of view of donors, fish farming has the potential to meet gaps in protein availability, provide an extra source of income and assist in diversifying rural livelihoods. In these respects it is analogous to many other strategies for rural development.

Currently the promotion of fish farming in Africa is facing a crisis. Donor optimism of twenty years ago

is being replaced by a wish to explain the ‘failure’ of African aquaculture. From the perspective of donors, this failure is manifested in a variety of ways. Farmed fish production from Africa is tiny compared to world totals (less than one per cent). Projects both fail to meet their immediate objectives and are unsustainable. In the light of this waning optimism, two things have happened: there has been a reduction in international assistance to African fish farming, especially in the 1990s, and there has been a mounting interest in gaining a better understanding of the rural communities into which the technology is introduced. One aspect of this is the wish to better understand gender issues.

## **4 THE CASE STUDY: FROM ROME TO THE FISH PONDS**

### **4.1 Fish and feminists in Rome**

Fish farming projects are promoted from within the fisheries department at the headquarters of FAO in Rome. The manner in which the department has addressed issues of gender is a response to a combination of influences: the personal motivation of individuals, the pressure from donors to include sensitivity to gender in project activities, and the constraining realities of both time and money.

Most of the expert staff in the fisheries department have a background in biology or fisheries management. Their main professional interest is fish – how to make sure they grow, how to manage stocks of them, and how to negotiate competing claims for them. They may have strong motivations regarding the well being of fish consumers, but success criteria in their jobs generally relate to such technical concerns.

Furthermore, there is a serious gender imbalance within the fisheries department. This is more pronounced than in the organization as a whole where, of 1,087 professional staff in Rome in December 1993, 219 (21 per cent) were women. On the other hand, women make up 1,311 of the 1,904 general service staff. Women in the professional grades tend to be clustered at the lower end of the salary scale. In the fisheries department there are 13 women in professional grades as compared to 77 men (14.4 per cent). Of these, none are in the senior grades of directors of division or chief of service (13 posts). In the Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service, which has primary responsibility

for aquaculture development, none of the ten professional staff are women (although all of the five general service staff are).

The gender imbalance in the department does not of itself imply inability or unwillingness to take gender issues seriously. However, the people occupying senior positions are not neutral, value-free implementers of policy. They bring to their post personal priorities, perspectives and experiences. Influencing these, though not necessarily either visibly or consciously, is a dominant and male-oriented view of the world.

Within the department however, specific measures have been taken to integrate gender issues in its work. These have included the establishment of a Core Group on Women and Fisheries, the organization of conferences concerned with women and fisheries and women and aquaculture, the publication of guidelines for planners to ensure that women are included in project preparation. The Core Group on Women and Fisheries includes representatives from all parts of the department. Its tasks are to review projects to check for inclusion of women, to organise and promote workshops and to 'sensitize counterpart experts and decision makers in recipient countries on gender issues' (Sen *et al.* 1991: 59). The implication is arguably that sensitization on gender issues in headquarters has already been achieved. The group's activities have, however, been limited because it had no funds allocated and has had to raise money through the different divisions.

In 1987 the Core Group, with financial assistance from NORAD, helped to organize the FAO's first conference on Women in Aquaculture (FAO 1987). All of the presentations to the conference were made by women. The opening address to the conference was made by the then head of the Aquaculture Development and Coordination Programme (a man). One paragraph warrants quoting in full:

I have been criticized for the organization of this workshop on two counts. First, have been criticized (and only by women, no less) for not inviting men as principal participants. But I have no good reason to do so. Frankly, even in this small workshop of thirty carefully selected participants, there is probably not one question I can ask about aquaculture which cannot be

answered by one of you. Thus, if during the next three days you need to know the typical labour force of a shrimp hatchery, or the organization for a credit programme in Africa, or the requirements of a project development document for UNDP, someone here among you will have the answer

(FAO 1987a: 6)

This statement reflects a view which is often only implicit: that 'women' can be dealt with separately and the process of technical planning can go on as before. Male gender identities are not questioned. Participants at the conference were predominantly academics and representatives of women's departments in international organizations. Some of them approach issues of gender from a feminist perspective in that they see the relations between men and women as hierarchical and potentially conflictual. The conference document thus illustrates how very different interpretations and perspectives on gender can be incorporated and co-exist within the overall policy making process. The process of incorporation accompanying persistent marginalization is key in the continuing slip from gender analysis to projects for women.

In his discussion of a development project in Lesotho, Ferguson (1990) argues that the kind of guide to action produced by academic analyses is of no use to development agencies (in his case the World Bank), because they do not provide a charter for the sort of intervention that the agency is set up to do. In the case of Lesotho, analyses suggesting that the causes of poverty are political and structural are 'unhelpful' because development agencies are not in the business of promoting political realignments or supporting revolutionary struggles. The picture becomes more complicated when, as in the example above, the 'unhelpful analyses' are included within the mainstream. Rather than being rejected as useless, they are adopted and ignored.

## 5 GENDER IN THE FIELD PROGRAMME

Despite the efforts of individuals, gender policy in the fisheries department in Rome remains little more than the collection of information. There is no institutionalized training for either Rome or field-based staff. This situation occurs in the face of mounting evidence about the need for such training. The calls for more and more information which characterize most of the Rome-produced

documents about women serve to by-pass more difficult questions of gender and power. The result is 'unsystematic and *ad hoc* measures being implemented and in some cases, the marginalization of gender issues in project activities' (Sen *et al.* 1991: 60). The marginalization of gender issues at the level of projects cannot however, simply be blamed on failures in gender training or failure to commit funds at central level. A more complicated process is taking place as the meaning of gender is shifted and translated.

In 1986, the FAO initiated a programme for aquaculture development in Southern Africa. Aquaculture For Local Community Development (ALCOM) was designed to move away from earlier unsuccessful development models and to be more 'participatory'. ALCOM was developed partially in response to a conclusion in the FAO's Thematic Evaluation of Aquaculture (FAO 1987b) which suggested that the limited sustained impact of fish culture projects was due to a lack of understanding of the socio-cultural and socioeconomic motivations behind small-scale farmers' decisions to adopt aquaculture. Accordingly, much of the programme's work has involved the execution of studies and 'methodology development'. Pilot projects have been set up in most of the countries of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region. These are coordinated from a headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The programme has received funding from several donors: the Swedes, Norwegians, Belgians, and Japanese. The greatest contribution has come from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). Within SIDA, a number of significant measures have been undertaken to institutionalize gender issues. The organization has had a WID office (now called the Gender Office) since 1979. The office undertakes training in gender awareness, attempts to strengthen the position of people responsible for gender at the country level, and develops methodological tools to be used in SIDA's planning cycle. Although not provided with a substantial budget, gender issues have a fairly high profile within the organization.

From ALCOM's inception, the role of women in aquaculture has had a high profile. In the programme's initial preparatory phase, 'women and youth' was identified as a separate target area. No specific budget was allocated '... as ALCOM has

always stressed the need for a multi-disciplinary approach' (Sen *et al.* 1991: 77). The aim of this target area was, through literature and studies, to identify options and activities to be included in project activities.

Programme management in Harare was increasingly under pressure to respond to two, not necessarily compatible demands: to produce fish and to exhibit gender sensitivity. On the one hand it was important to address an apparent failure of the programme to produce tangible results, and to find ways of using the results of studies. On the other hand, the need to be seen to be doing something about women remained strong. The result was two-fold. First, a series of studies and meetings were undertaken, and publicity material continued to focus on the important role of women. Second, gender issues remained largely absent from the rest of the programme's activities.

In November 1990, ALCOM hosted an international meeting at Victoria Falls to discuss gender issues in fisheries and aquaculture development. Following this workshop, and in response to its recommendation for more disaggregated information, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), agreed to fund a sub-project within the ALCOM programme, 'Enhancement of the Role of Women In Fisheries and Aquaculture Development'. The aim of the sub-project was the incorporation of gender issues in projects for inland fisheries and aquaculture development in southern Africa. Intended outputs were the production of gender specific data, guidelines and checklists for collecting gender specific socioeconomic information, and the formulation of pilot projects.

In the synthesis paper to the Victoria Falls meeting various policy approaches to gender issues over the last 20 years are discussed. Approaches advocating equity and speaking in terms of subordination are contrasted with efficiency and poverty focused approaches. Equity approaches are dismissed. '[T]his approach (the 'equity' approach) proved unpopular mainly because it sought to change the social relationship between men and women through a redistribution of power. Politically, therefore, the approach was not acceptable, nor was it easy to implement' (Sen *et al.* 1991: 63)

A focus on data collection avoids such contentious issues. Hence this is the main outcome of the

gender project – and its main finding. According to the project final report, the principal conclusion of studies carried out in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Zambia but unrelated to project activities, was that: 'there is a severe gap in some gender related information, particularly on the division of labour between sexes, access and control over productive resources and responsibility for decision making' (FAO 1993: 3).

Guidelines for filling the information gap were therefore needed. These were drafted by FAO personnel and consultants and begin from the premise that there has been little change in sectoral planning regarding gender issues because there is insufficient information on such issues. Furthermore, planners are not certain how or where to obtain such information. Given this premise the guidelines are surprisingly full of sweeping generalizations about both men and women. While lamenting the lack of information, the guidelines do not address other reasons causing planners and host governments to ignore gender issues, particularly those arising from their own motivation. They do not consider why and under what conditions issues of gender may be relevant. As with the studies, and with the recommendations produced by the Victoria Falls workshop, the vast amount of documentation, methodologies, and guidelines produced fail to articulate the problem of women's position in a way that would be challenging or contentious. Despite the obvious fact that a fair amount of information about women in aquaculture has been produced, the issue of why it is not translated into practice is bypassed.

While the guidelines and the meetings failed to confront the essentially political nature of gender relations, ALCOM's publicity machine continued to produce plenty of evidence for the programme's gender sensitivity. Several editions of ALCOM News have contained articles on women and fish farming. In January 1992, the front cover story was devoted to a photo essay about women and fish farming in Luapula Province, Zambia. It starts: 'Fish farming hasn't ushered in a blue revolution. It has in fact meant a dawn-to-midnight grind for some rural women. But it has given them another income alternative. It has stimulated an upbeat spirit in them. A new hope for tomorrow' (ALCOM 1992: 9)

The article provides a response to those who question the tangible benefits of fish farming, and

express concern that it is so manifestly a technology taken up primarily by men. The emphasis is on family harmony in fish farming, to the extent of caricature. The complexity of the sexual division of labour is simplified to 'my wife helps me with everything' says Stanilaus proudly' (ALCOM 1992: 8). Gender is thus highly visible and apparently important to ALCOM. However, in the same way that fish farming is a technology largely promoted by men for men, gender issues are construed, by both men and women, as something articulated by women for women. Hence, ALCOM publications which are not specifically about women still tend to assume that the farmer is a man, decisions are made by him, and benefits reach all members of the household equally. At a staff meeting in Harare, gender issues had a place on the agenda as 'the women project'. It was relegated to 'any other business' in the list of priorities, but in the end not discussed because a socioeconomist had not been appointed.

Discussion of 'gender' and 'women' does not disappear the closer to the fish ponds and rural communities one gets. At the same time as people from Rome and from Harare bring these debates to the villages, they are re-articulated by both men and women in these villages. It is at the level of the pilot project, the interface between the interveners and the supposed beneficiaries, that questions of strategies and personal priorities become most pertinent.

## 6 LOCAL LEVEL BUREAUCRACIES

In 1991-2, I carried out field work in Luapula Province, Zambia. The research was funded by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), but hosted by ALCOM. They had been implementing a pilot project in the area since 1989 and my role was to provide socioeconomic inputs to the project as part of a wider research project. My research was to build on existing studies carried out by ALCOM staff and consultants. Among these were two which had specifically considered gender issues in fish farming (Mbozi 1991; van der Schoot 1989).

The pilot project had initially involved the posting of two expatriate workers, an aquaculturist and a socioeconomist, to the province. They were to work with department of fisheries extensionists, conducting trials and studies and developing extension materials. The province was initially thought to be

a success story for fish farming as there had been a rapid expansion in pond construction. However, management practices were not technically optimal and the extension service was so under-resourced as to be ineffective. Both of the first two project workers had left by early 1991 and were replaced by an new aquaculturist in mid 1991. He arrived at about the same time as I did.

The new project worker was in a complex position and had to respond to a number of imperatives. In the first place, he was in his first job in Africa and needed to make a success of it for his own career reasons. He quickly understood that efficient management of ponds and the production of fish were increasingly important success criteria for his employers. Second, he had to address a legacy of ill feeling which had developed between the ALCOM project and the local fisheries department. People in the department expressed resentment that the project did little more than conduct studies and certainly did not come up with important tangible goods: vehicles, allowances and equipment. Third, he had to respond to the pressure to include women in his work. For one thing there was me, reminding him that it would be wrong to assume joint household utility. For another, he had to host the occasional forays of the ALCOM publicity machine. The issue of ALCOM news devoted to women and fish farming in Luapula involved a four day visit by the ALCOM information officer.

For the aquaculturist, spending time with fish farmers every day, certain facts became clear. Most fish pond owners in Luapula, as elsewhere in Africa, are men. Men have better access to land, much more free time, and are more likely to be adept at gaining access to extension services. Historically, as with many other innovations, fish farming was promoted as a technology for men. Women do contribute labour to male-owned ponds, but such labour contributions are determined largely by women's perceived benefit. They cannot necessarily be taken for granted and depend on the complicated and negotiated nature of intra-household relations. To complicate matters further, household form in Luapula is not fixed and unchanging. Although the most common household form is that of two adults and their dependent children, unstable marriages and frequent temporary migration mean

that today's nuclear household may not always be identical to tomorrow's.

However, awareness of these complexities in the face of a need to get farmers to produce fish is not very useful. As Villareal points out, the front line worker who has the mission of presenting a package and making it work has to work out appropriate strategies, possibilities, and constraints. It is therefore not surprising that those who are targeted and therefore subject to the benefits of the project are those who are 'willing, able, and at hand' (Villareal 1992: 251). For the aquaculturist the most sensible way of dealing with limited resources and producing the goods was to work directly with the most visible farmers, those prepared to put themselves forward. These were almost all men.

The pressure to include women in the work was not completely ignored though. Rather it was adopted as just that – the inclusion of women, rather than as a concern for gender relations. On a 'fish farmer exchange', in which farmers were taken to visit the ponds of other farmers, the itinerary included a female fish farmer. The woman visited was many miles drive from all of the others. She had two huge dry ponds which had been professionally excavated, although on poor soil. She was a former provincial governor. The relevance of her experience to the semi-subsistence farmers who came to visit her was unclear. She was, however, a woman.

For the extensionists, this apparent insistence on the inclusion of women was largely incomprehensible. All but one of the extensionists in Luapula were men. The one woman was not from the area, and was transferred away after only a year. For these men, the prevailing view is that women are weak, powerless, and unable to participate in decision making: 'Traditionally, women are known to be weak to men. This therefore puts them off most of the activities, for instance fish farming. In short, inferiority complex is a hindrance for women'.<sup>3</sup>

Although this view does not tie in with evidence that women in Luapula do the majority of physical labour (Allen *et al.* nd), or visible evidence of their activity in fish farm maintenance, it is strongly held by extensionists. The pressure to include women in everything is therefore seen as at best an oddity,

<sup>3</sup> From presentation to Seminar for Fish Scouts, Mansa, March 1991, by Mr H.Mwape.

but more commonly as an inconvenience. In the first place, extensionists and more senior personnel in the department have limited means with which to do their jobs. Only one extensionist in the province has a motorbike, and the rest make do with broken bicycles or rely on transport from the project. There is one departmental vehicle, which is also used for capture fisheries work. In the face of mounting inflation, government workers' salaries are also increasingly worthless. Therefore, the arrival of a donor-funded project brings the prospect of both a greater ability to carry out one's job and possibly perks through the provision of allowances. In the case of ALCOM, however, there was a perception that the donor arrived with an imposed target group which was both irrelevant and used up scarce resources. At the same time, the expected benefits were not forthcoming. To extensionists, there are only doubtful benefits in seeking out women all the time, and this is what they perceived ALCOM's interest to be. In practice the analysis of gender becomes translated to the inclusion of women, a dictate which, when imposed on men who cannot see the point, is resented.

## 7 COMMUNITY AND HOUSEHOLD

From the FAO in Rome, to ALCOM and the Luapula pilot project, notions of gender relations and the role of women in fish farming are developed, changed and re-interpreted according to the perspectives of different actors. But this process does not stop with passive recipients at the end of the chain in the villages of Luapula. The language used within the project suggests passivity. Women are a target group. So are poor farmers, and model farmers. But the target groups themselves use and manipulate the inputs of the project. As Olivier de Sardan (1988) has argued, the symbolic as well as material and economic benefits of projects are the subject of tension, manoeuvring, and competition.

In Luapula certain farmers wish to be associated with development and progressiveness. This has deep historical roots. Moore and Vaughan (1994) note for neighbouring Northern Province that letters from aspiring 'progressive farmers' in the 1940s show the way a discourse of development had become a shared discourse between colonial officials and certain groups of African men. They argue that 'it should not surprise us then, that when

people respond to new development schemes and policies, they bring their history with them' (Moore and Vaughan 1994: 234).

For the farmers in Luapula, the material gains to be made from association with the ALCOM project are by no means obvious. There is, however, a long history of donor and government intervention in the area. The legacy of this is a tendency to associate projects with material support. One effect is the consistent – and indignant – requests for loans, assistance, and inputs. Some farmers also respond strategically to the ALCOM project as they have done to predecessors. In particular they adopt the kind of language and concepts promulgated by the project and others before it. At a meeting for the distribution of loan forms for fish farming, I overheard the following conversation:

**A:** We must learn to show that we are a good community to get these loans.

**B:** No, that is not what is important now. They are interested in individual farmers now. We must each show that we have a good plan. Then we will get the loans.<sup>4</sup>

Another farmer still believed that community participation was the important catchword. He was the owner of a large vegetable garden, supported with private sponsorship. He took Ministry visitors to see it and proudly told them, 'this is our community vegetable garden'.

Crehan and van Oppen note a similar phenomenon elsewhere in Zambia, where 'we are your sons and daughters, you are developing us' means 'we have legitimate claims on you' (Crehan and van Oppen 1988).

Not all farmers enter the discourse of development in this way. Those that do tend to be better educated, slightly better off, and more likely to be men. In general, women are less likely to attend meetings, or to make claims on extension services. However, there are signs that women, like men, are beginning to learn the possible strategic importance to them of adopting the gender agenda. In certain villages in Luapula, there has been a succession of visitors (not only from ALCOM) whose primary concern seems to be 'women'. Often this concern

<sup>4</sup> Source: field notes 17/9/92.

has been manifested in the formation of women's clubs. Clubs are recognized by many as a means of access to development assistance because they have often been the principal means through which loans and grants have been distributed. It is not surprising therefore that in the village of Chibote, which had received at least four researchers asking questions about women (including myself), the ALCOM information officer taking photographs of women, a German nutrition project for women, a Swedish health clinic with a focus on women and children, a Danish sewing project, and an ALCOM 'mutual feeding centre', women will come together as clubs at the least encouragement. Unlike in other parts of the province, a number of women have dug and managed fish ponds. On my arrival in the village, I was immediately greeted by a group of women, asking me to 'register' them as a club. They explained: 'We are women. We have dug ponds. We must be a club now. We need to be registered' They said that they had received many visitors interested in fish farming who had promised them a club but still nothing had happened.

It would be over-hasty to suggest that women justify their efforts in digging fish ponds more in terms of the prospect of development assistance than because of any benefit from the pond itself. It is nevertheless clear that several women and men in the village are aware of, and ready to respond to, the interest in gender which is articulated by the various projects, including ALCOM. Conflicts over resources within the household and disputes in access to community resources, are not part of that agenda by the time it has filtered through the project process. Nor are they part of the shared discourse between interveners and intervened.

While developers speak in an undifferentiated way about households, assuming a sharing and harmonious unit, that picture is reflected in the responses of both men and women in the villages. They are happy to confirm the picture. There is every chance that Stanislaus did say 'we share everything' proudly. True or not, there is nothing strange in it being unacceptable to speak publicly of dissension or disharmony within the household. As Wilson notes for a community in North London: '[i]t was clear that in virtually all marriages, there was a conspiracy of silence where inspection would have challenged the dominant ideology of marriage – the shares were not fair' (Wilson 1991, cited in Kabeer 1994: 227).

Behind the image of unity is a much more complex state of affairs. The transitory nature of many marriages in Luapula means that many men and women adopt separate economic strategies, or at least try to ensure possibilities for independence in the event of changes in marital status. There is an identifiable division of labour according to certain tasks, but a flexible and varied control over the products of the labour according to the nature and apparent stability of the marriage tie. Often a shift towards greater separation in farming activities, and to women taking exclusive control of particular fields, is a precursor to marital breakdown. Women and men farmers in Luapula may not talk in terms of gender analysis, but the negotiated and shifting nature of gender relations, the incorporation of both conflict and harmony are still critical to them.

## 8 CONCLUSION

From the fish ponds in Luapula to Rome, 'women' becomes shorthand for 'gender analysis'. In the process, the political implications of a gendered analysis fade away. The influences at work in the process cannot be neatly read off as male resistance or organizational inadequacies. Among the stakeholder perspectives are those of men who believe that women should deal with things about women and that this is really not their concern. Such a view is reinforced by the fact that the widespread subordination of women is unsurprisingly reiterated as an important aspect of feminist gender analysis. As Sarah White has argued, regardless of discussions about the rightness of WID or WAD, GID or GAD, '... even if we use the term 'gender', we almost always talk about it only in relation to **women** not men' (White 1994: 98). Although there are very good reasons for this, there is a tendency to further the idea that it is women who need to do the changing. While there is still a need therefore, for men to be aware of women's interests, claims, and rights, it is equally crucial to make male gender identities themselves an issue.

From the point of view of the organization, the demands for simplification and categorization are strong. This is manifested in a thirst for information which there is no capacity to digest or act upon. On the one hand the variety of men's and women's interests eludes systematization. On the other, the goals, objectives and methods of the organization are not neutral and reflect these varying interests. Away from the headquarters, the priorities and



incentives of individuals are different, whether they are project workers, bureaucrats or farmers. People

use, manipulate, ignore, and translate concepts of gender according to these priorities and incentives.

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